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ABSTRACT

This booklet presents a screening device to identify quickly those students who may qualify for special help but who have not been referred for testing, identification, and receiving of special education resources. The booklet notes that the original test consisted of 20 sentences, but that only one sentence gave students known to have severe reading and/or spelling problems extreme difficulty, but caused little problem for all other students--"Many students often find studying difficult." The booklet discusses the original test, offers reasons why this one sentence is effective as a "rough" screening device, and presents instructions for test administration. The booklet notes that those students who seriously misspell the sentence, and who are not already identified as learning disabled, should undergo further testing to determine their eligibility for special help. (RS)

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AVKO "Great Idea"
Reprint Series #609

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by

Don McCabe

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What is AVKO?

AVKO is a non-profit tax-exempt membership organization founded in 1974 that is:

- subsidized by donations and grants.
- open to membership to anyone interested in helping others learn to read and write.
- run by members from as far away as Hawaii and Quebec and whose daily operations are handled by volunteers.
- planning to build and operate a model reading research center in a YEAR-AROUND **camp** setting that would economically and efficiently service the needs of dyslexics of all ages.
- trying to spread the concept that parent and spouse tutoring in spelling/reading skills can be successfully taught in adult community education classes and that members of a problem reader's support group can greatly assist the efforts of any volunteer tutor working in the literacy movement.
- providing newsletters and economical opportunities to pursue individual research projects and to take part in large scale cooperative research projects that have immediate practical applications.
- attempting to accomplish these goals primarily through the profits generated by the inservices, workshops and the sale of materials developed for the special needs of students, parents, and adults – but AVKO still needs donations to survive.

An L.D. Screening Device That Can Be Given To Entire Schools In Less Than 10 Minutes

PURPOSE:
This device is intended to serve as a rough screening device to quickly identify those students who may qualify for special help but who, for one reason or another, haven't been referred for testing, identification, and receiving of special education services.

ORIGIN:
In 1967 I received the full cooperation of the administration and the teachers within the English department at Northwestern High School in Flint, Michigan in the designing of and the administering of a diagnostic spelling test to the entire school's population, over 2,000 students.

ORIGINAL TEST DESIGN:
The test was composed of 20 sentences that were recorded on Language Master cards. Each teacher was shown how to administer the test. Students absent from their English class on the day of testing, were tested by me. The sentences were designed to provide a data base for helping the staff determine which were the most common spelling problems that deserved our immediate attention.

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS:
Every single word was missed by at least one student, including such words as I, a, the, and my. Many students

scored perfectly, not missing a single item. But, it was sentence #14 that provided the big surprise.

"WIPEOUT" TIME:
Every student with a known severe reading and/or spelling problem was "wiped out" by this sentence. Conversely, all students without severe reading/spelling problems were able to write the sentence with a minimum of misspellings.

THE SENTENCE:
"Many students often find studying difficult."

ORIGINAL DESIGN OF THE SENTENCE:
All of the 20 sentences on the spelling test were designed to test the students' knowledge of spelling specific words in regular sentence context. This sentence was designed to give a count of the number of students who would omit the plural *-s* in students, misspell *often* as "offen," misspell *find* as "fine," mistakenly drop the letter *y* when adding *-ing* to *study* to form "studing" instead of *studying*, and finally, choose the wrong vowel for the schwa sound in the word *difficult*.

MY PERSONAL EXPLANATION FOR THE PHENOMENA : Although students were wiped out by other sentences, this sentence proved to be the only true discriminator because, as I see it, it was an overload type of task. First of all, it started with the very common word *many* which everyone "knows" that "everyone knows" how to spell. Except, the word *many* isn't that

simple. It doesn't follow the normal rules of phonics. We just don't spell *many*, "menny" as we do penny and Denny. This frustration makes it even more difficult for students with severe LEARNING DISABILITIES to spell the word students which sounds like "stew" "dince." Again, the word *often* is such a little word and such a common word, the inability to come up with the proper spelling, is frustrating. "*Find studying*" is run together in normal speech and the ending sound "d" of *find* is not emphasized. The student misspells *find* as "fine" or" fin" and by now has little mental energy to solve the even more difficult words: *studying* and *difficult*.

ADMINISTERING THE LESS-THAN-10-MINUTE TEST TO AN ENTIRE SCHOOL:

Give the following instructions to each homeroom teacher:

Dear _____,

This morning in homeroom PLEASE give your students the following test. It should not take more than five minutes of your time. You do not have to correct them. Just collect them and turn them in to _____

PLEASE READ THE DIRECTIONS AND THE TEST EXACTLY AS IT APPEARS BELOW:

Today, we're going to take a quick five-minute test on FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS:

First of all, each of you must have a clean piece of paper and a pencil. It shouldn't take you more than 15 seconds to get out your paper and pencil. (Be prepared to give students paper and pencil who don't have any of their own.)

I am only going to give each direction three times. So listen carefully. So listen carefully. So listen carefully.

1. Fold your paper in half so that what was the long way is now the short way. (REPEAT TWO MORE TIMES.)

2. Write your LAST NAME ONLY in the upper left hand corner. (REPEAT TWO MORE TIMES.)

3. Write your FIRST NAME directly underneath your last name. (REPEAT TWO MORE TIMES.)

4. Print your HOMEROOM and COUNSELOR LETTER in the UPPER RIGHT HAND CORNER. (REPEAT TWO MORE TIMES--This direction should be changed to whatever regular means of student identification that is normally used in your school.)

5. On the third line from the top write the following sentence:

Many students often find studying difficult.
Many students often find studying difficult.
Many students often find studying difficult.

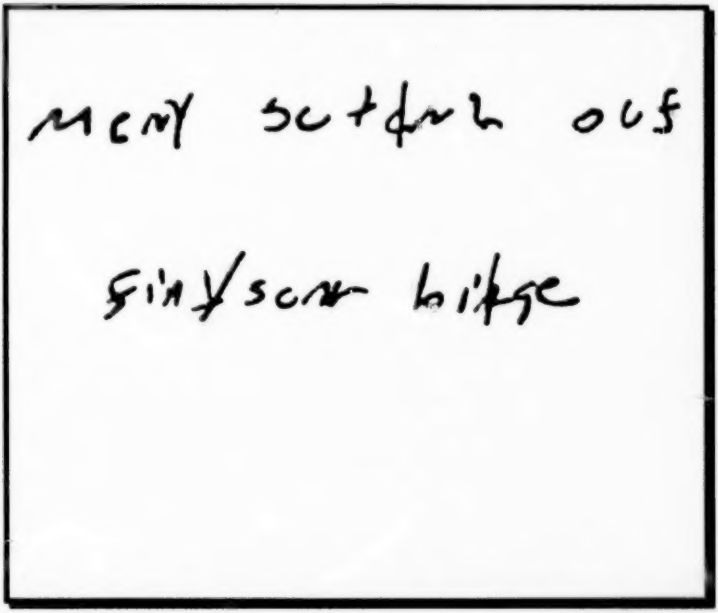
6. Fold your paper in half once more so that the writing is inside. (REPEAT TWO MORE TIMES.)

7. On the OUTSIDE LEFTHAND CORNER PRINT my name, _____ and Homeroom # _____. (REPEAT TWO MORE TIMES.)

8. On the OUTSIDE RIGHT HAND CORNER WRITE today's date. (REPEAT TWO MORE TIMES.)

9. Now, pass the papers in.

When the papers are delivered to you, all you have to do is look for the few that have just "ungodly" misspellings such as the following:



Since on the paper you have the students' names and counselors you can quickly check to see if all of them are in special programs. If some of them aren't, then these are the ones that you should see to it are at least referred to your special program as those who probably need help. Undoubtedly, they will have to be given other, more scientific, tests to determine their eligibility. But this test is only designed as a fast pre-screen to assist you in determining who might also be tested and referred that regular referral sources inadvertently missed.

An Overview of the Services Provided by the AVKO Foundation

- Inservices, Workshops, Training Sessions for:
  Classroom Teachers, Parents, Homeschoolers,
  Adult Literacy Volunteer Tutors,
  Reading and Curriculum Consultants,
  Special Education Consultants.
- Educational and Instructional Materials.
  Write for FREE catalog.
- FREE Daily Tutoring at the AVKO Reading Clinic.
- Bernice Webb Memorial Library.

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